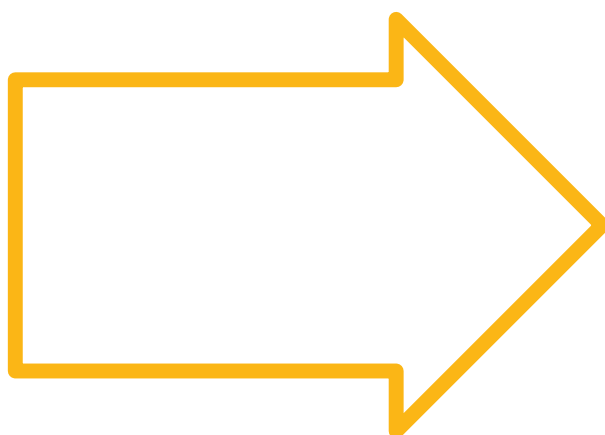
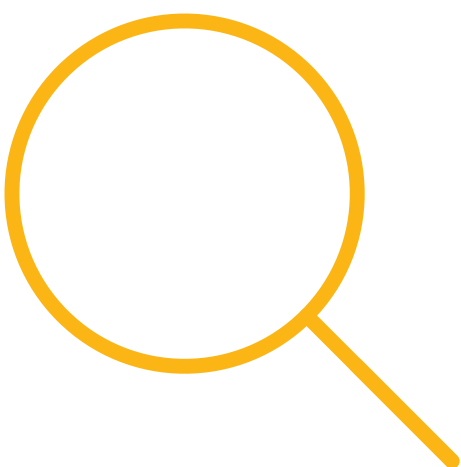
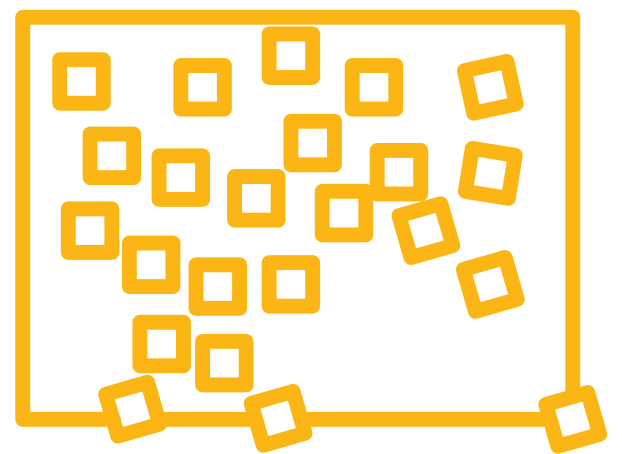
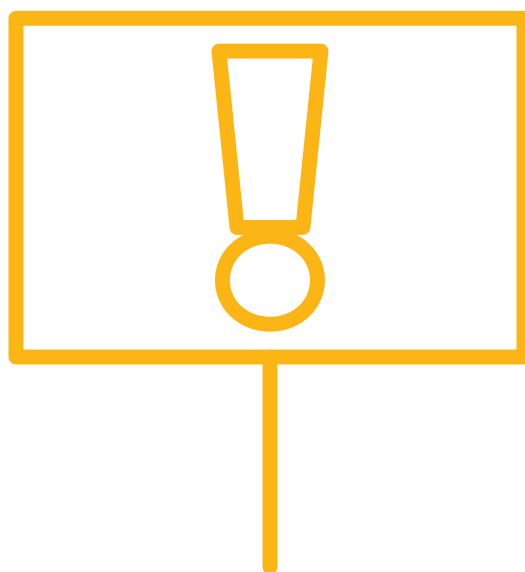
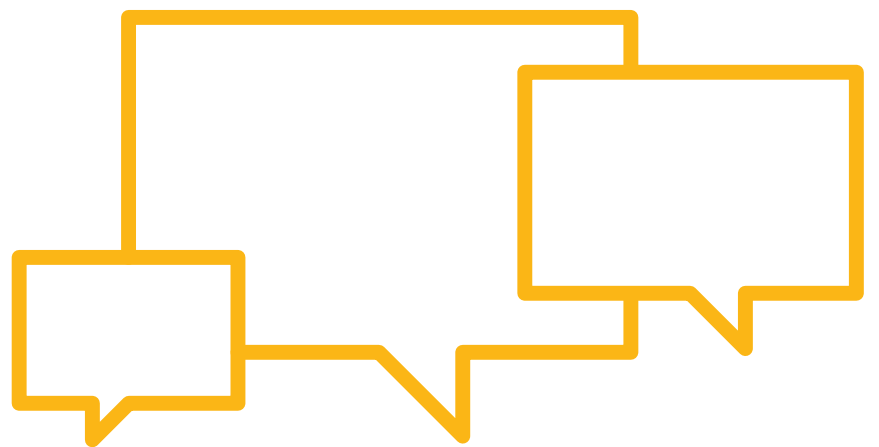
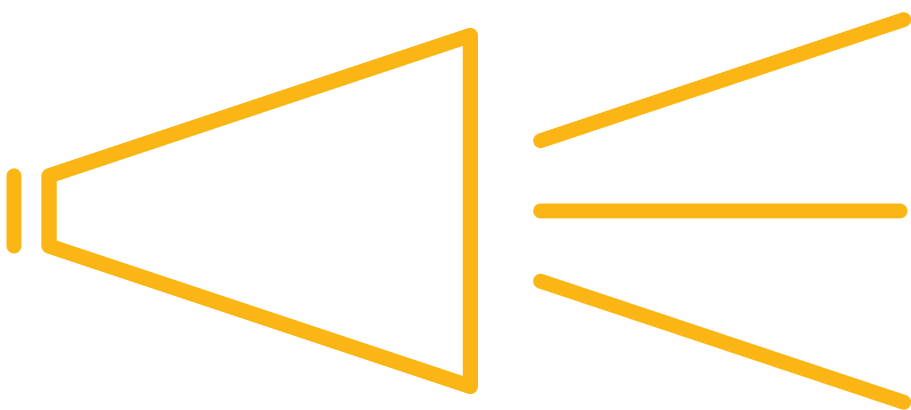


What Happens When Communities Organize?

Last year we set out to demonstrate something our experience has shown to be true: that when people come together around issues of common concern, good and important things happen.

NEW YORK
FOUNDATION



What Happens When Communities Organize?

As a long time supporter of the city’s vibrant community organizing and advocacy groups, often in their earliest stages, we wanted to illustrate how these organizations—large and small—are often the connective tissue between community members and campaigns to win significant public policy change. We wanted to capture the rich complexity of our grantees’ experiences and suspected that the most interesting, compelling parts of what we knew to be true couldn’t be easily explained by turning them into data sets.

Determined to draw a fuller picture of what happens when community members come together around common concerns, we decided to ask our grantees directly:

What policy wins and accomplishments over the past 3 years are you most proud of?

How would you categorize the types of policy wins and accomplishments?

What strategies were used to accomplish those wins?

How were community members who participated changed by their involvement in this work?

Findings

1 Wins and accomplishments fell across a wide spectrum.

Foundations talk a great deal about large-scale policy wins and game-changing victories. But, when we asked them directly, what mattered most to our grantees were not the accomplishments that had received the most public attention. Many groups chose wins that may seem modest by some measures but are significant to community members.

City or state policy wins often involved efforts of multiple groups. Newer organizations valued meeting milestones along the way toward larger accomplishments. Groups also valued the development of new leaders and shifting power dynamics as accomplishments.

2 Groups used multiple, sophisticated strategies to achieve policy wins and accomplishments.

There was no linear pattern or set formula to successful campaigns—and groups employed a wide variety of strategies. Most groups reported periods of trial and error, and the need to adjust strategies and adapt to evolving political or policy landscapes.

3 Each win or accomplishment had its own distinctive and instructive story with a strong human element.

New Yorkers from neighborhoods across the city—parents, students, immigrants, people who were formerly incarcerated, LGBTQ youth, public housing residents, shelter residents, former drug users, sex workers, workers in restaurant, retail, and food production—acted as leaders and were personally changed by their experiences.

Notes on Methodology

We sought the advice and expertise of the Community Development Project’s Research Institute at the Urban Justice Center. They developed a set of interview questions, guided our interview process, and helped interpret the information we collected.

We developed a list of New York Foundation grants from 2009 to 2014 to organizations that use community organizing as a core approach.

We used a broad definition for community organizing and considered organizations that engage in leadership development, issue campaign development, membership base building, direct action tactics, and that play a leading role in collaborations, alliances, and coalitions to change public policy. We also considered organizations that are engaging in community building activities such as creating opportunities for broad community participation, pushing racial equity strategies, as well as organizations that integrate community development, advocacy, and human services to establish trust and build community with residents.

Grantees were grouped in two categories: “established” organizations that had been in operation more than 5 years and “start-up” organizations that have recently been added to New York Foundation docket.

Two interview guides were created, one for established organizations and one for start-up organizations. While the questions were generally the same, we asked established organizations to identify a “win” or campaign victory whereas start-up organizations were asked to focus on an organizing campaign “accomplishment.” This was based on the assumption that organizations that had only been in operation a few years may not yet have a significant win but would be able to identify accomplishments that will move them closer to campaign victories. All respondents were able to self-define “win” or “accomplishment.”

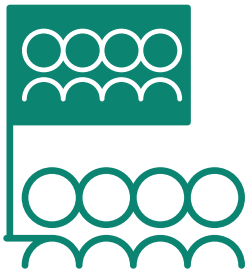
In total, 38 interviews were conducted: 25 with established organizations and 13 with start-ups. The data was entered into survey monkey. Qualitative and quantitative data was analyzed and summarized by the Community Development Project and this data was used by designer Manuel Miranda.

Key to Icons

Wins



Win Categories



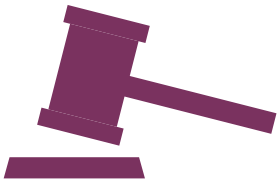
Democratic Participation

Increased public and citizen participation or democracy in an issue or government body.



Neighborhood Change

Concrete improvement to a neighborhood.



Enforcement

The enforcement or implementation of laws that already exist on the books but may not be implemented in practice.



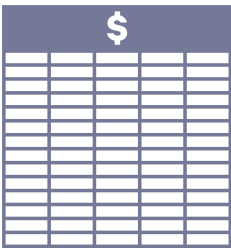
Oversight

Monitoring and oversight over a particular issue, agency or program from either governmental or citizen committees or individuals.



Legislative

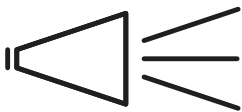
Involves changing existing laws or introducing new laws. These laws can be local laws, state laws, or federal laws.



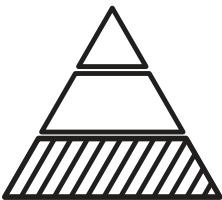
Budgetary

Funding changes, such as increased or decreased funding for a particular program or community or opposition to budget cuts.

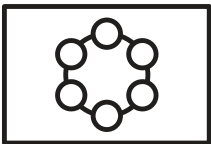
Strategies



Advocacy



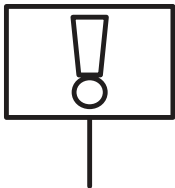
Base Building



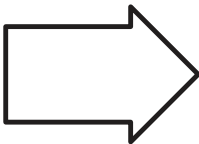
Coalition Building



Community Lawyering



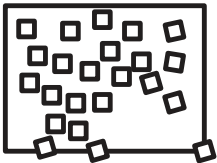
Direct Action



Leadership Development



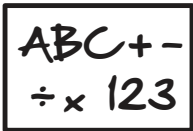
Strategic Communication



Participatory Planning & Design

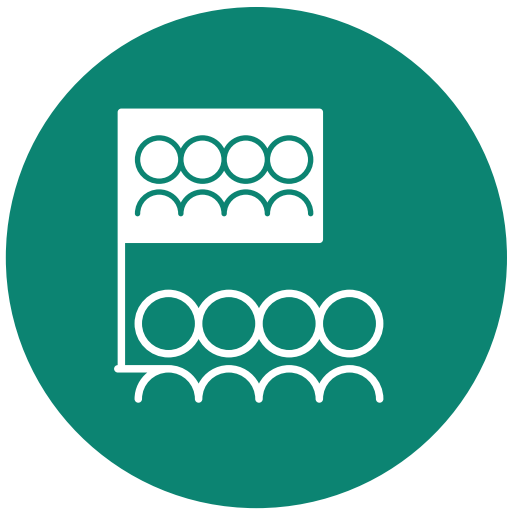


Participatory Action Research



Popular Education

Overview of Wins



Democratic Participation

Start-Up Organizations

- Built Leadership of Local Public School Parents
- Mobilized Far Rockaway Youth in Participatory Budgeting Process
- Brought Visibility to Struggles of Food Production Workers
- Built Local Campaign to Address Violence Against Black Women
- Brought the Voice of African Immigrants to the Debate Over Immigration Reform
- Led Campaign to Reform Brooklyn Housing Court
- Fought to End the Use of Condoms as Evidence of Criminal Activity

Established Organizations

- Defeated Proposal for Curfew In Hudson River Park
- Created A Teen Health Initiative Led By Youth
- Forced City to Replace Toxic Light Fixtures In NYC Public Schools
- Expanded Participatory Budgeting In NYC From 4 to 24 Council Districts
- Forced Rent Guidelines Board to Hold Hearings in Outer Boroughs
- Passed the Community Safety Act
- Forced Franklin Lane High School to Reopen Its Campus Library
- Mobilized Community for Mass Demonstration in DC Calling for Comprehensive Immigration Reform
- Improved School Food In Brownsville
- Improved Address Signage at Red Hook Houses
- Shaped the Proposal to Reduce the Size of The Sheridan Expressway
- Mobilized Dominican New Yorkers to Win Historically Low Increase
- Stopped Police Raids In NYC Shelters
- Led Anti-Bullying Campaign that Engaged Sikh Youth
- Passed NYC Law Requiring Paid Sick Days
- Won Permanent Affordable Housing in Seward Park Site
- Won Rebuild by Design Competition for Hunt's Point
- Won Visas and Settlements for Trafficked Workers



Neighborhood Change

Start-Up Organizations

- Built Leadership of Local Public School Parents
- Mobilized Far Rockaway Youth in Participatory Budgeting Process
- Educated Community Members About Rezoning of Domino Sugar Factory Site

Established Organizations

- Created A Teen Health Initiative Led By Youth
- Improved Address Signage at Red Hook Houses
- Expanded Participatory Budgeting In NYC From 4 to 24 Council Districts
- Won Rebuild by Design Competition for Hunt's Point
- Getting Toxic PCB-Filled Lights Out of NYC Public Schools
- Defeated Proposal for Curfew In Hudson River Park
- Passed the Community Safety Act
- Shaped the Proposal to Reduce the Size of The Sheridan Expressway
- Won Permanent Affordable Housing in Seward Park Site
- Creation and Promotion of Teen Health Initiative
- Forced Franklin Lane High School to Reopen Its Campus Library
- Led Anti-Bullying Campaign that Engaged Sikh Youth
- Forced City to Replace Toxic Light Fixtures In NYC Public Schools
- Forced Rent Guidelines Board to Hold Hearings in Outer Boroughs



Enforcement

Start-Up Organizations

- Secured Meeting Between City Council Speaker and Day Laborers at Workers' Center Site
- Passed NYC Law for Paid Sick Leave
- Led Campaign to Reform Brooklyn Housing Court

Established Organizations

- Passed the Community Safety Act
- Forced Franklin Lane High School to Reopen Its Campus Library
- Led Anti-Bullying Campaign that Engaged Sikh Youth
- Defeated Proposal for Curfew In Hudson River Park
- Stopped Police Raids In NYC Shelters
- Forced Rent Guidelines Board to Hold Hearings in Outer Boroughs
- Won Visas and Settlements for Trafficked Workers
- Moved the NYS Assembly to Protect Job Seekers
- Forced City to Replace Toxic Light Fixtures In NYC Public Schools
- Won Campaign to Stop Illegal Lockout of Tenants

Wins and accomplishments fell across a wide spectrum.



Oversight

Start-Up Organizations

- Mobilized Retail Workers for Campaign to Win Fair Hours and Wages
- Fought to End the Use of Condoms as Evidence of Criminal Activity
- Mobilized Far Rockaway Youth in Participatory Budgeting Process

Established Organizations

- Forced Rent Guidelines Board to Hold Hearings in Outer Boroughs
- Won Visas and Settlements for Trafficked Workers
- Passed the Community Safety Act
- Mobilized Dominican New Yorkers to Win Historically Low Increase
- Won Campaign for a 30% Rent Cap For People Living With HIV/AIDS
- Improved Address Signage at Red Hook Houses
- Led Anti-Bullying Campaign that Engaged Sikh Youth
- Expanded Participatory Budgeting In NYC From 4 to 24 Council Districts
- Won Rebuild by Design Competition for Hunt's Point
- Won Permanent Affordable Housing in Seward Park Site
- Defeated Proposal for Curfew In Hudson River Park
- Forced City to Replace Toxic Light Fixtures In NYC Public Schools
- Shaped the Proposal to Reduce the Size of The Sheridan Expressway



Legislative

Start-Up Organizations

- Fought to End the Use of Condoms as Evidence of Criminal Activity
- Brought the Voice of African Immigrants to the Debate Over Immigration Reform
- Mobilized Retail Workers for Campaign to Win Fair Hours and Wages
- Passed NYC Law for Paid Sick Leave
- Secured Meeting Between City Council Speaker and Day Laborers at Workers' Center Site

Established Organizations

- Won Campaign for a 30% Rent Cap For People Living With HIV/AIDS
- Moved the NYS Assembly to Protect Job Seekers
- Led Anti-Bullying Campaign that Engaged Sikh Youth
- Won Visas and Settlements for Trafficked Workers
- Mobilized Dominican New Yorkers to Win Historically Low Increase
- Passed the Community Safety Act
- Forced City to Replace Toxic Light Fixtures In NYC Public Schools
- Passed NYC Law Requiring Paid Sick Days
- Mobilized Community for Mass Demonstration in DC Calling for Comprehensive Immigration Reform



Budgetary

Start-Up Organizations

- Mobilized Far Rockaway Youth in Participatory Budgeting Process
- Mobilized Subway and Bus Riders to Oppose Cuts to State Transit Budget
- Led Campaign to Reform Brooklyn Housing Court
- Secured Meeting Between City Council Speaker and Day Laborers at Workers' Center Site
- Built Leadership of Local Public School Parents

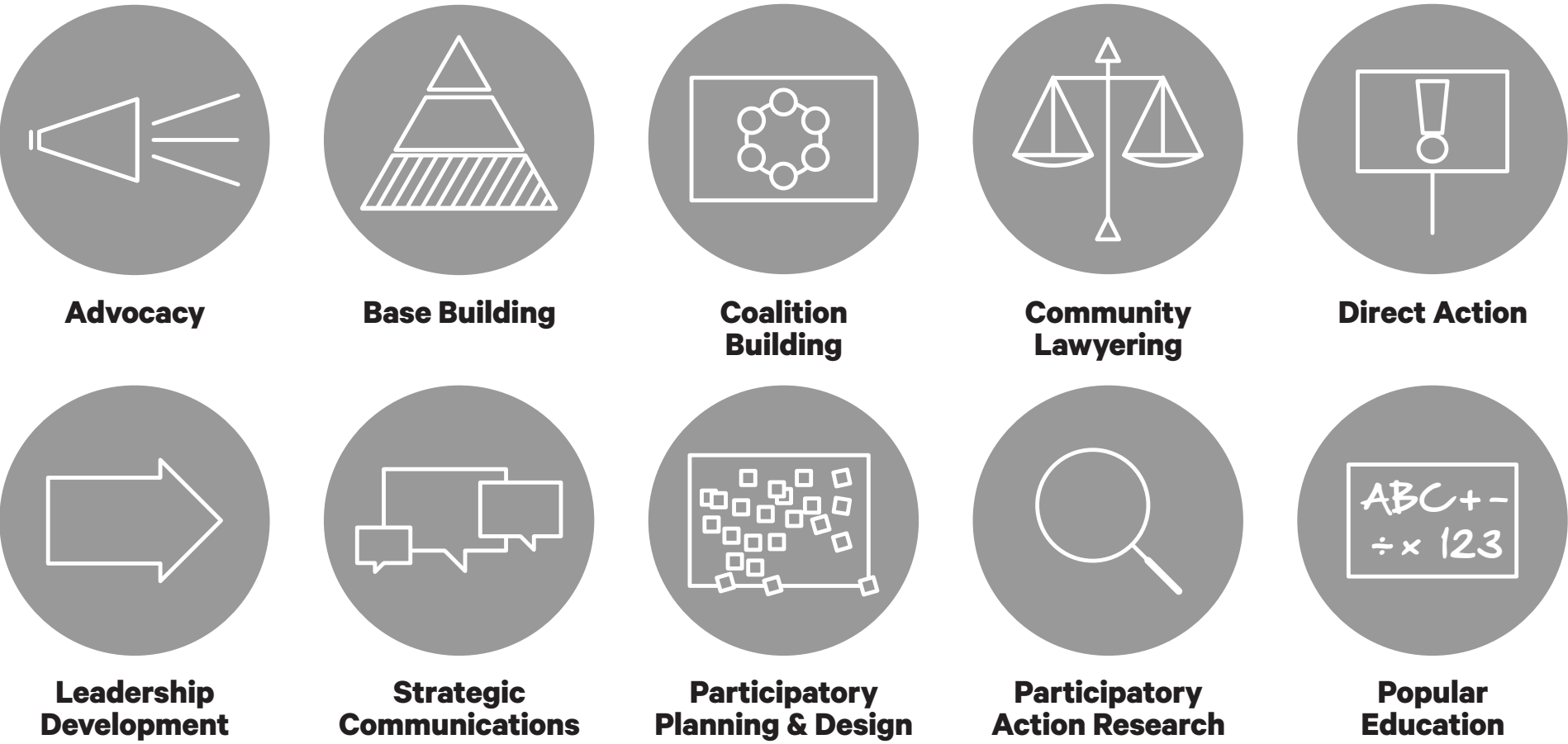
Established Organizations

- Shaped the Proposal to Reduce the Size of The Sheridan Expressway
- Won Rebuild by Design Competition for Hunt's Point
- Expanded Participatory Budgeting In NYC From 4 to 24 Council Districts
- Passed the Community Safety Act
- Won Permanent Affordable Housing in Seward Park Site
- Forced Franklin Lane High School to Reopen Its Campus Library
- Forced City to Replace Toxic Light Fixtures In NYC Public Schools
- Won Campaign for a 30% Rent Cap For People Living With HIV/AIDS

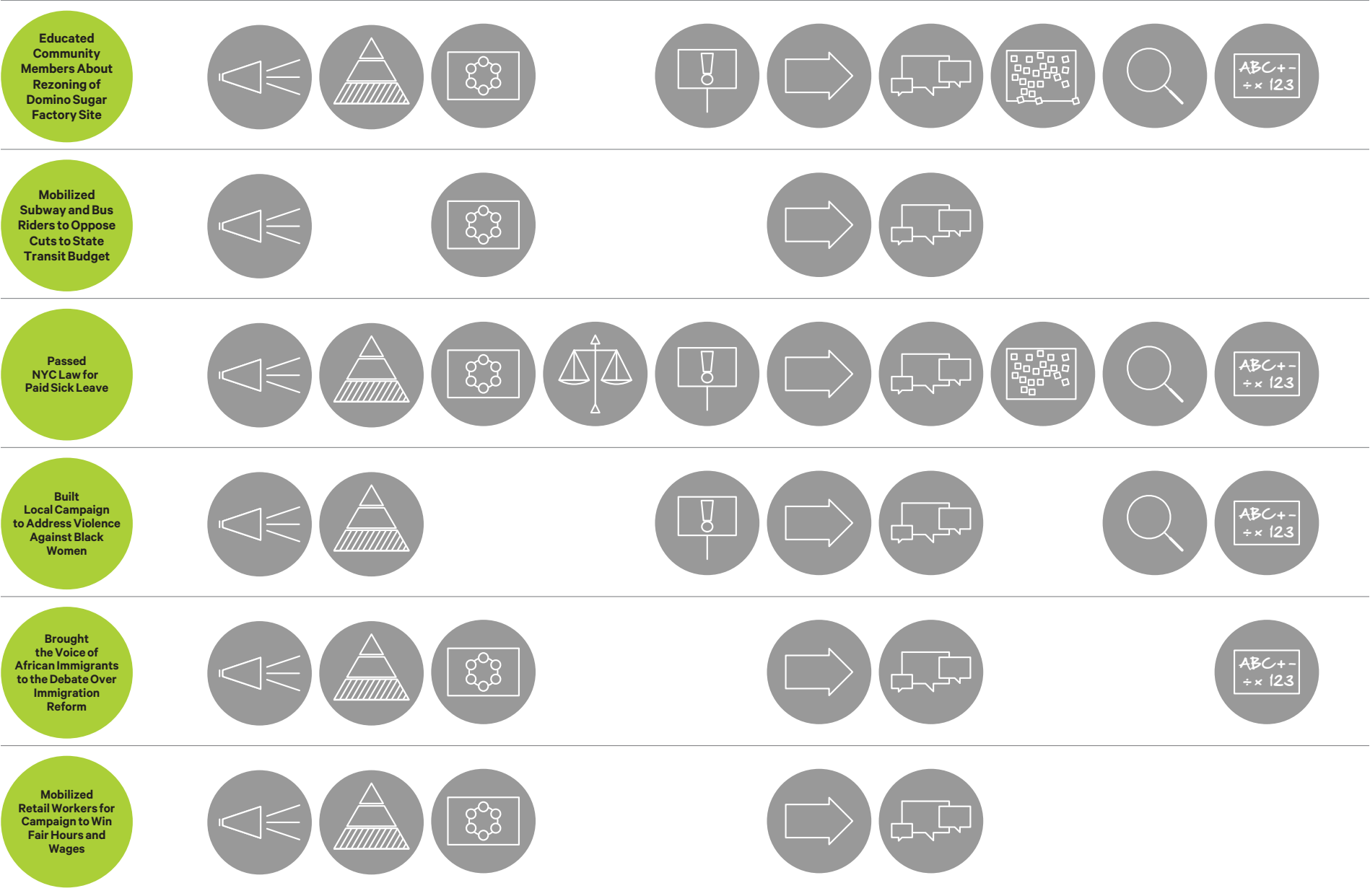
What Strategies Were Used Most Often?



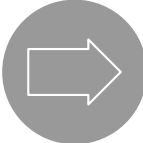







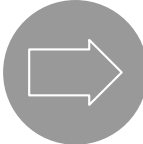




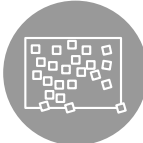










Groups used multiple strategies to achieve policy wins and accomplishments.

Strategies





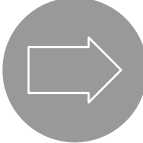







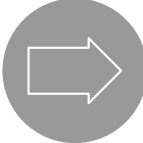

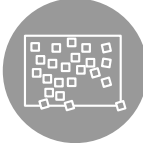






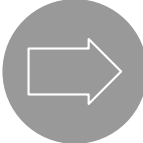






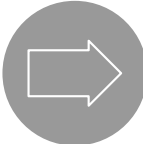









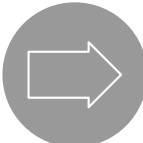














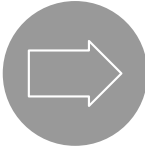







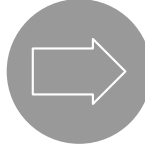








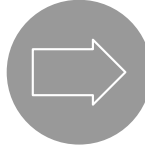




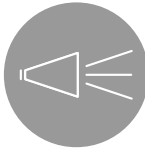

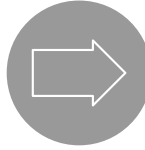





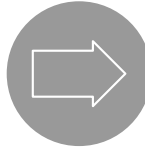







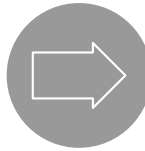
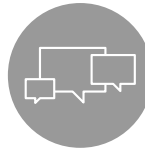






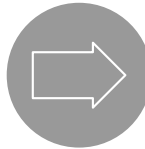












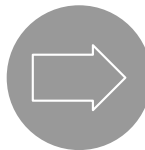






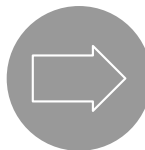





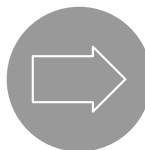








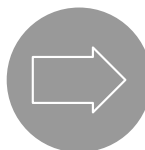

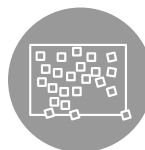






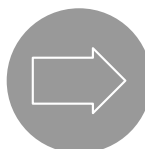


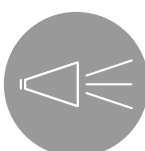


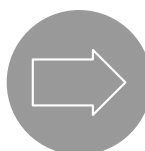

Start-Up Organizations



Secured Meeting Between City Council Speaker and Day Laborers at Workers' Center Site									
Brought Visibility to Struggles of Food Production Workers									
Built Leadership of Local Public School Parents									
Mobilized Far Rockaway Youth in Participatory Budgeting Process									
Fought to End the Use of Condoms as Evidence of Criminal Activity									
Led Campaign to Reform Brooklyn Housing Court									

Established Organizations

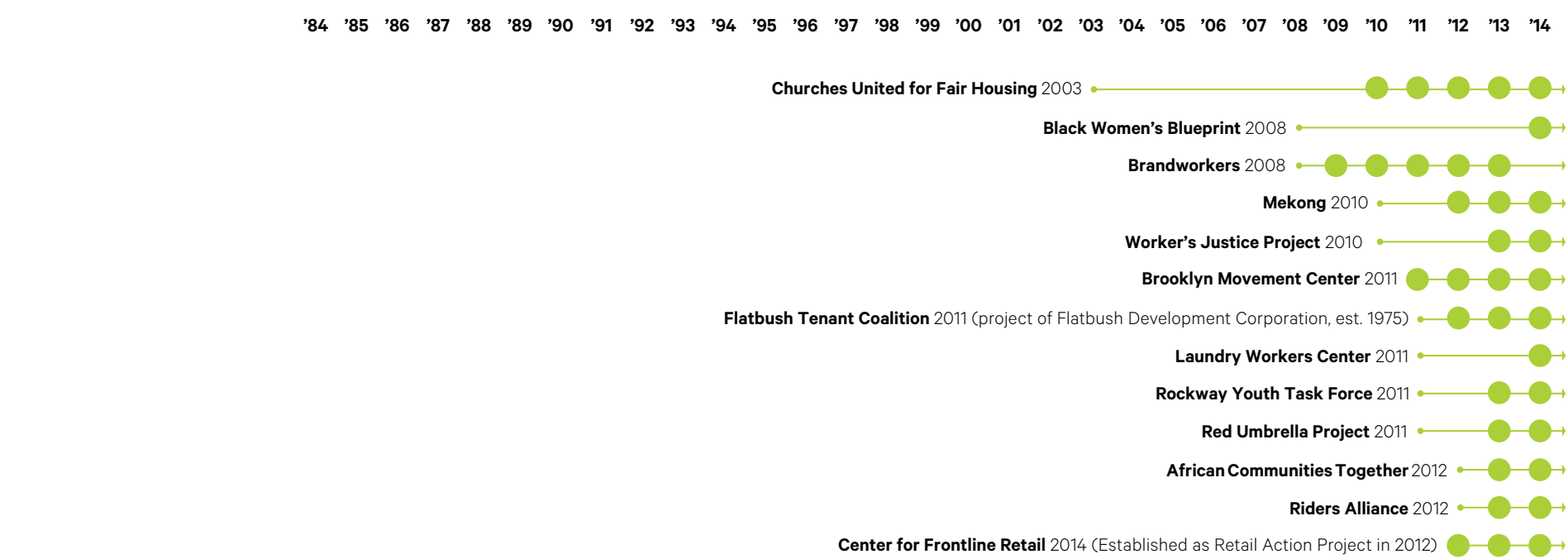
Passed the Community Safety Act										
Won Rebuild by Design Competition for Hunt's Point										
Won Visas and Settlements for Trafficked Workers										
Forced City to Replace Toxic Light Fixtures In NYC Public Schools										
Won Campaign to Stop Illegal Lockout of Tenants										
Moved the NYS Assembly to Protect Job Seekers										
Won Campaign for a 30% Rent Cap For People Living With HIV/AIDS										

Led Anti-Bullying Campaign that Engaged Sikh Youth										
Stopped Police Raids In NYC Shelters										
Mobilized Dominican New Yorkers to Win Historically Low Increase										
Defeated Proposal for Curfew In Hudson River Park										
Shaped the Proposal to Reduce the Size of The Sheridan Expressway										
Passed NYC Law Requiring Paid Sick Days										
Won Permanent Affordable Housing in Seward Park Site										
Mobilized Community for Mass Demonstration in DC Calling for Comprehensive Immigration Reform										
Expanded Participatory Budgeting In NYC From 4 to 24 Council Districts										
Forced Rent Guidelines Board to Hold Hearings in Outer Boroughs										
Improved Address Signage at Red Hook Houses										
Forced Franklin Lane High School to Reopen Its Campus Library										
Created A Teen Health Initiative Led By Youth										
Improved School Food In Brownsville										

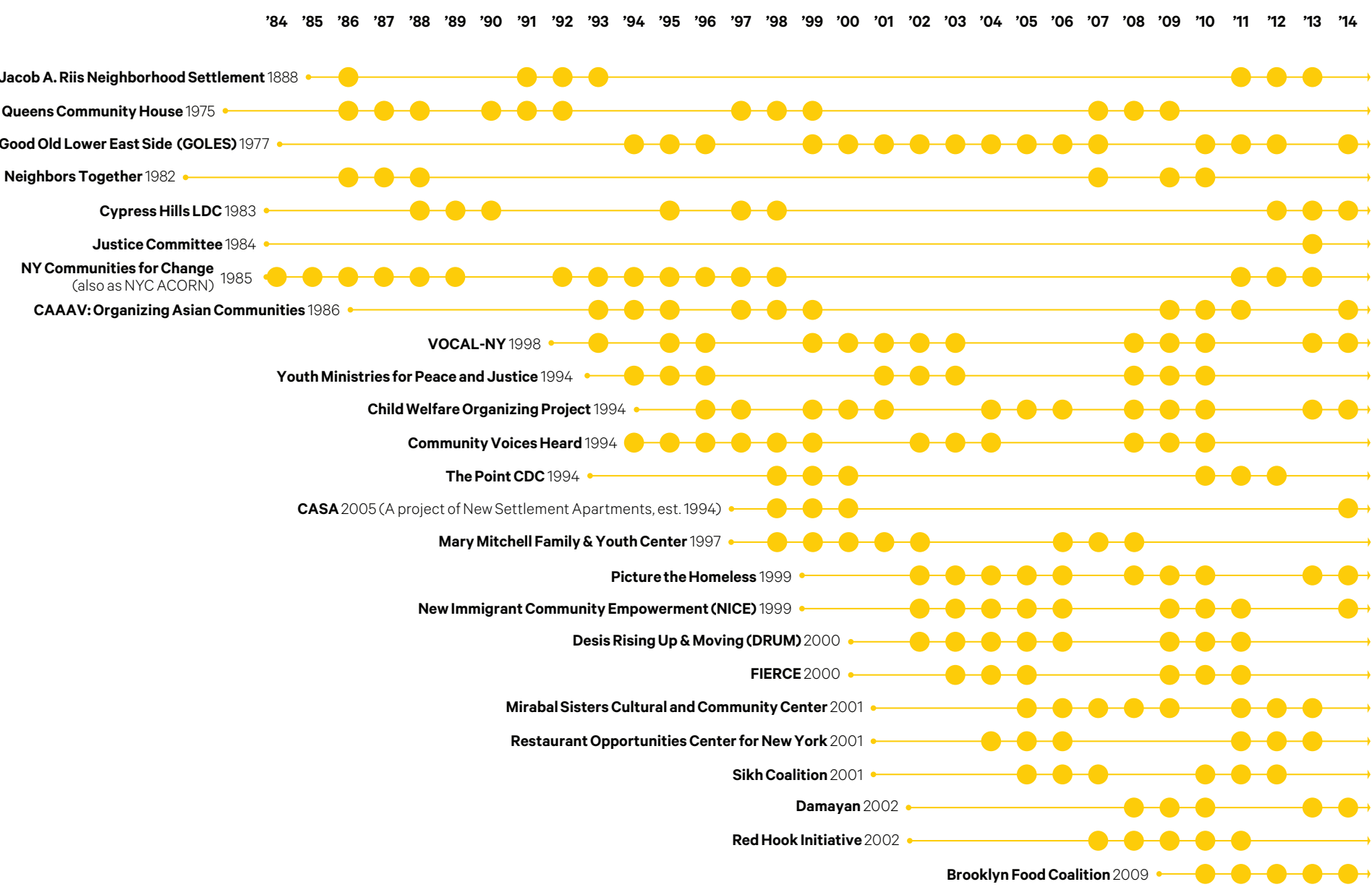
Consistent Support Matters

Years of support by New York Foundation since inception.

Start-Up Organizations



Established Organizations



The Stories Behind the Wins

Democratic Participation



Base Building

Our reason for existence at the end of the day is not a new law or discrete improvement, but for members to create an organization of their own that they can use to exert pressure and voice for years to come. It’s not only about increasing enforcement of the law but about developing ties and solidarity with allies—this is what matters to us. Members value improvements in their jobs but they also value feeling empowered and acquiring new skills—personal development is valued at the same level of not being screamed at.

—BRANDWORKERS

Neighborhood Change



Participatory Action Research

Community residents conducted participatory based research and engaged in planning. They were effective. It is a core strategy now and a game changer. We do direct service, community organizing, but now we also say we do community-based participatory research.

—GOOD OLD LOWER EAST SIDE



Popular Education

The Rent Guidelines Board (RGB) process is confusing to people. It is confusing how the government is involved in the decision, or why the process has worked the way it has.

—COMMUNITY ACTION FOR SAFE APARTMENTS



Leadership Development

Core members involved in participatory budgeting in District 8 have seen their leadership skills advanced through participation in the process and taking on new roles and responsibilities for carrying out a process in their districts.

—COMMUNITY VOICES HEARD

Each win had its own instructive story with a strong human element.

Enforcement



Community Lawyering

Collaboration helped us achieve our labor trafficking win. Safe Horizon and the Community Development Project of the Urban Justice Center used community lawyering to win wages owed to our members from diplomats.

—DAMAYAN



Direct Action

As soon as we learned that the NYPD was conducting middle of the night shelter raids at Freedom House on the UpperWest Side, our organizer and members began doing outreach there to gather information.

—PICTURE THE HOMELESS



Strategic Communications

It was critical to bring together a combination of parents, teachers, custodial staff directly affected by PBV exposure with legal back-up and cross-party elected official support.

—NY COMMUNITIES FOR CHANGE

Oversight



Advocacy

Many of our members live in three-quarter houses, where they are subject to the very common practice of illegal evictions, or threat of illegal evictions. When they call 911 for help, NYPD officers frequently and improperly take the landlords' side and do not follow their own Patrol Guide procedures on unlawful evictions. We worked with the NYPD to create a message that dispelled many of the misconceptions about three-quarter houses and unlawful evictions. It was read in all NYPD precincts for ten consecutive roll calls. Our coalition worked hard to ensure that three-quarter house tenants are made aware of the message and its use at a tool they can use to prevent illegal evictions.

—NEIGHBORS TOGETHER

Legislative



Popular Education

How do you keep people excited and energized when they are discouraged? Popular education and storytelling build resilience and help members feel empowered. We are not waiting to be validated by elected officials or the *New York Times*.

—RED UMBRELLA PROJECT

Leadership Development

Members were instrumental in raising the profile of these issues. They were extremely effective at rallies, told their stories to city council members, and they engaged consumers. They conducted community dialogue sessions where workers, consumers and employers sat over a meal. This was really possible because of the leadership development of members.

—ROC-NY



Advocacy

When City Council Speaker Viverito heard an employer advocating on behalf of the workers, everything changed for her. It's important that we get key stakeholders speaking with key political officials.

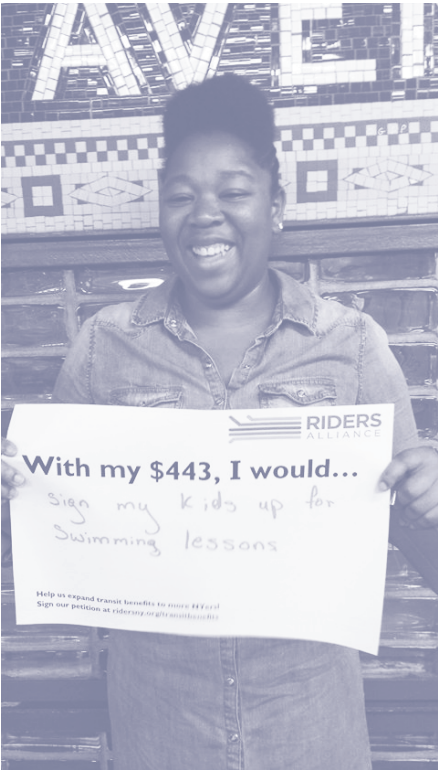
—WORKERS JUSTICE PROJECT

Base Building

A decade of work in the police accountability movement was at the forefront of the work to pass the Community Safety Act.

—CAAAY

Budgetary



Coalition Building

A big fight, like trying to push an issue in the state budget, requires a lot of strength — enough to make the elected officials concerned about their constituent members. A coalition has to have enough capacity to produce all of the basic elements of a budget campaign: special events, communications with elected officials, communications with news media, and so on. The coalition was essential to pushing our issue — particularly because in the state budget, it was valuable to work with organizations that have relationships outside the five boroughs.

—RIDER'S ALLIANCE

Participatory Action Research

Lack of interest in attending college was an issue that came up in surveys and, in particular, the lack of college access services. Youth zeroed in on the local high school's library as an issue. They visited other libraries, met with librarians, examined Department of Education budget, and met with principals to examine barriers to providing library services.

—CYPRESS HILLS LDC

Advocacy

The campaign victory involved both a statutory change and a significant, ongoing budget commitment by New York City and State. In addition, with regard to oversight, one of the tactics we used was monitoring to spotlight unstable housing among their clients, and the disproportionate impact it had on low-income communities of color, which we used to further build support for the campaign.

—VOCAL

The Leaders Behind the Wins

Youth and community members were able to advocate and create proposals for improvements they would like to see in their communities. Many times, youth have no say in the decisions that are made for them regarding school, afterschool, community centers and recreation.

—ROCKAWAY YOUTH TASK FORCE



Members are asked, “Do you believe in a solution and are you willing to risk and struggle?”

—BRANDWORKERS





One of our leaders had been in housing court for over six months battling an eviction when this bill was passed and signed into law, which gave her a reprieve. In the future, she won't have to choose between paying her rent and traveling to the doctor, covering healthcare co-pays, buying groceries, or other essential needs.

—VOCAL



They are seeing the power of their investigative work, the power of coming together and brainstorming solutions, and agencies having to reform their ways because they know that they are being watched.

—NICE

These wins have an immediate impact on our members — they obtain quicker translation; are better able to physically get to the courtrooms on time; are more fully informed about what their proposed stipulations mean, and are more likely to have their repairs addressed as part of their cases.

—FLATBUSH TENANT COALITION



Many of our members are in shelters and subject to police raids. If not arrested themselves, they are woken up because a shelter resident near them is being awakened and arrested, loudly, lights on. Some members described being terrorized by this, or feeling humiliated. Members were proud that we mobilized and organized and turned this policy around.

—PICTURE THE HOMELESS



Credits

A special thanks to the following groups for responding to our survey:

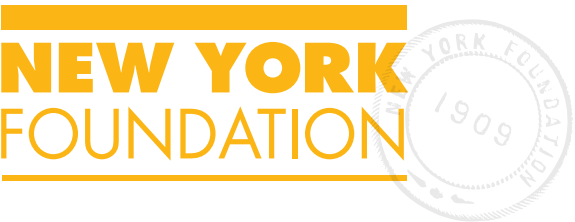
- African Communities Together
Black Women’s Blueprint
Brandworkers
Brooklyn Food Coalition
Brooklyn Movement Center
CAAAY: Organizing Asian
Communities
Center for Frontline Retail
Churches United for Fair Housing
Community Action for Safe
Apartments/New Settlement
Apartments
Child Welfare Organizing Project
Community Voices Heard
Cypress Hills LDC
Damayan
Desis Rising Up & Moving
FIERCE
Flatbush Tenant Coalition
Good Old Lower East Side
Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood
Settlement
Justice Committee
- Laundry Workers Center
Mary Mitchell Family & Youth Center
Mekong
Mirabal Sisters Culture and
Community Center
Neighbors Together
New Immigrant Community
Empowerment
New York Communities for Change
Picture the Homeless
The Point CDC
Red Hook Initiative
Red Umbrella Project
Restaurant Opportunities Center
for New York
Riders Alliance
Rockway Youth Task Force
Queens Community House
Sikh Coalition
VOCAL-NY
Worker’s Justice Project
Youth Ministries for Peace
and Justice

Research Partner

Alexa Kasdan
Director of Research and Policy
Community Development Project
Urban Justice Center

Designer

Manuel Miranda
MMP
www.manuelmiranda.info



New York Foundation

10 East 34th Street, 10th Floor
New York, NY 10016
(212) 594-8009
info@nyf.org